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## NOTES AND QUERIES.

ORIGIN OF THE CAT; A NEGRO TALE. — When I stepped on the cat her limp and her cries were so piteous I took her to the kitchen to apologize in a saucer of cream and ask Mammy to care for her.

“Did *you* trod on dat cat? I certainly is mighty sorry, for it’s bound to be onlucky for you if you hurt a cat.”

I ventured the opinion that to kill a cat brought ill luck, but had not heard anything about accidentally hurting one.

“My mercy, chile, don’t you know it is a *sin* to kill a cat? Duz you know anything about cats and how they come to be here on this earth?”

I acknowledged my ignorance, unless they were included in the general creation, and procession into the ark.

“Well, white folks don’t know *nothing* ’cept what they reads out a books. Wa’n’t *no* cats in *no* ark, and it’s a sin to kill a cat, ’cause a cat is Jesus’ right-hand glove. Jesus was down here once, on this here earth, walking round jest like a man. I ’spects you heerd about *that*, did n’t you? It’s all put down in the Bible, they tells me. I never *seen* it thar, fer I can’t read nor write; don’t know one letter from the next, but it’s all writ down in the Bible, what God sent down from heaven in a bush all on fire right into Moses’s hand. Yes, indeed, it is God’s own truth, jest as I am telling you. When Jesus was here in this world, He went round constant visiting cullud folks. He always was mighty fond of cullud folks. So one day He was a walking along and he come to a poor old cullud woman’s house. When He went in the door and give her ‘howdy,’ she stand still and look at him right hard. Then she say ‘Lord’ (she never seen nor heerd tell of Him before, but something in her just seemed to call his name), and she kept on a looking and a looking at Him hard, and she say over again, ‘Lord, I is jest mizzable.’ Then he say, ‘Woman, what you mizzable fer?’ Then she say, the third time, ‘Lord, I is mizzable, fer the rats and the mice is a eating and a destroying everything I got. They’s done eat all my corn-meal, and all my meat; they’s done eat all my clothes. They’s eat holes in my bed, and now they’s jest ready to eat me myself, and I am that mizzable, I don’t know no more *what* to do.’

“Jesus he look long time at her, mighty hard, and he say, ‘Woman, behold your God!’ and then He pulled off his right-hand glove, and flung it down on the floor. Soon as that glove touched that floor, it turned into a cat, right then and right thar, and it began a-catching all them rats, and all them mice, more’n any cat done since when it do its best. Indeed it did, made out of Jesus’ right-hand glove, before that woman’s own eyes, — the four fingers for the legs, and the thumb for the tail, — and that’s the *truth* ’bout how cats got here. Guess you know *now* why it’s a sin to kill a cat, and ’bliged to be unlucky to hurt one.”

Marcia McLennan.